



OMAN COUNTRY PROFILE

MEPI in Oman: Partnerships to Promote Reform and Opportunity

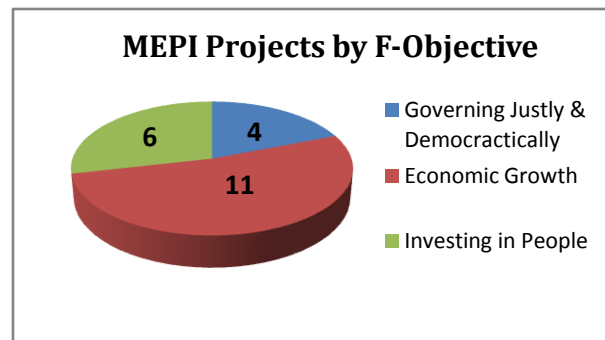
Capitalizing on interest in reform in Oman's government and among its citizenry, MEPI programming in Oman increases the capacity of Oman's fledgling parliament, strengthens civil society organizations through project grants, expands women's roles in Omani society, and develops Oman's labor unions into effective constituent-based organizations that also provide a model of grassroots democracy at work. MEPI strives to partner with Omani citizens as they transition towards greater public participation in governance and a more active civil society. MEPI programming provides opportunities to engage with a wide range of Omani interlocutors and institutions to promote reform in education, the economy and judicial system.

MEPI awards are instrumental in the area of economic growth in Oman, including support for small and medium-sized enterprises and commercial law development. In addition, MEPI projects identify sectors of Oman's economy ripe for growth which will also increase the local market for U.S. services. As a part of this effort, MEPI programming supports the implementation of the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which demonstrates the benefits of liberalized trade and an investor-friendly regulatory framework with strong intellectual property rights protections.

MEPI's Oman Portfolio

There are currently 21 active MEPI projects in Oman: 17 multi-country projects including Oman; and 4 Oman-specific projects.

The pie chart shows which U.S. Foreign Assistance objectives are addressed by MEPI programming in Oman.



MEPI's Partnerships in Oman

The MEPI-funded **High School Journalism Education Program** is administered by the U.S.-based NGO International Education and Resource Network (iEARN-USA), in partnership with the Academy for Educational Development (AED), Northwestern University, International Center for Journalists, and the Daniel Pearl Foundation. The project has a simple but important goal: to equip high school students in Oman with a foundation in journalism. As a part of the project's activities, high school teachers receive training in journalism and journalist mentors offer training and guidance to the students. For example, in 2009, the MEPI High School Journalism Education Project brought ten educators and five journalists from Oman to Northwestern University in Doha, Qatar, for a two-week journalism workshop. The workshop included two parallel tracks, one on high school journalism for participating teachers and the other on new media training for journalists. The two groups also came together to plan their year-long mentorship plans, during which the journalists will visit schools and guide students to produce online and/or print newspapers.



MEPI's **Partnership Schools Program (PSP)** has been implemented in Oman by Creative Associates International, Inc. (CAII) since 2005, working in close partnership with the Ministry of Education and Sultan Qaboos University staff. PSP - Oman activities focus on the development of child-centered classroom teaching methodologies (CCCM), curriculum development, and educational management skills training. The project also focuses on targeted interventions designed to ensure that Omani partners are capable of the sustained growth and replication of the school reforms demonstrated to date. Successes under

this project include the development and testing of new "life skills" curricula for secondary school Grades 11 and 12, as well as the development of a professional staff at the Omani Ministry of Education to draft and review curricula and text books. Through CCCM, child-centered teaching and learning techniques have been introduced in all primary schools in Oman, and a National Coordination Committee, charged with the integration of education initiatives, has been established.

With the assistance of Oman-based experts, Omani law school professors completed development of a **Practical Judicial Guide** on Labor Law issues in Oman for judges, lawyers, workers, businessmen, and all interested parties. This first-of-its-kind guidebook was developed as part of a MEPI local grant, and is now being used as a reference source at Sultan Qaboos University Law School. The guidebook is the result of more than a year of planning and cooperation among MEPI, the U.S. Mission in Muscat, and the legal and judicial sectors in Oman, and will serve as a practical reference for judges, lawyers, businessmen, and workers in Oman.



In Oman, small businesses are considered a critical engine for economic growth. Assisting women in attaining entrepreneurial skills to maximize small business potential is a key goal. Supported by MEPI's local grants program, **Dar Al Atta**, a leading charitable organization in Oman, started a program to encourage small and medium business ownership for economically disadvantaged women. In January and February 2009, Dar Al Atta conducted training for 65 women from low-income families across the country to teach them how to launch a business, achieve professional success, and climb the entrepreneurship ladder.